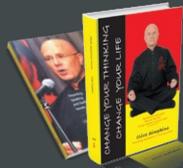




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Meditation for stress relief – Part III

If you've read my previous two sections on this topic, you're now ready to take your contemplation, concentration and meditation process to the next level – which is to consciously move the focus of your attention. There's a very simple way to do this. Where your eyes go – even when they're closed – your attention and consciousness will go.

If you've tried repeating your contemplation word – whether it's peace, shalom (Hebrew), shanti (Hindi), Salaam (Arabic) or another chosen word, you'll already know the focus improvement it produces. If you have a religious leaning (and that's absolutely not necessary for the stress relief delivered by meditation) then you may wish to cup your right hand over your left hand and hold them both against your chest in the vicinity of your solar plexus (breastbone area). If you're using a relaxation image, a candle flame or a deity picture as your focus, hold the image there. This helps to focus your attention even more closely as you repeat your word.

Now gently take your attention (move your eyes there) to your throat and as you repeat your peace word or mantra, keep your focus there for five minutes or so. Then gently shift your eyes and your focus to the centre of your forehead. Keep it there. All you're doing is learning a gentle control over your mind – so that it goes where you want to take it – instead of the usual, which is the other way around!

When you've kept your attention in the middle of your forehead for about five minutes, gently take it up to the centre of the top of your head. Stay there for about five minutes. Have the sense that with your attention in that location, you're in tune and harmony with the entire universe. All people, all animals, all of nature, all consciousness. Feel the sense of unity. Feel the peace. Feel the sense that all is one.

Now gently start the descent process. Shift your attention slowly back to the centre of your forehead. Let your attention rest peacefully there

as you repeat your peace word or mantra or hold your visualisation. After about five minutes, let your attention and focus gently descend to your throat area again. Keep your focus. If your mind wanders, don't jerk it back, just gently resume the focus. This is a patience, persuasion and endurance game. For it to be sustainable, you need to take time to teach the mind a new habit – and habits are developed through repetition.

Stay at your throat area for about five minutes and then slowly allow your focus to return to your hands in front of your breast-bone. Let your focus settle there again. Have the feeling that throughout your busy, stressful day, there'll be a place of peace and tranquillity in the middle of your chest. When things get hectic – just as if you're going to a little cave for some peace and quiet – you can slip into the memory of the tranquillity and calm that pervaded your morning contemplation process.

In that heart-space and place, feel your peace and calm radiating into the Universe and touching your loved ones, your pets and the people you'll come into contact with during the day. Anticipate a day of enhanced tranquillity and reduced tension. Be assured you'll carry your calmness with you regardless of what you do on the day.

Now slowly open your eyes. Don't move, don't jump up. Transport your state of calm into the external, observable world. Be grateful for the good things in your life. Thank the Universe or God (depending on your preference) for the opportunity of doing this contemplation and relaxation exercise. Make a pact with yourself that you're going to try do it tonight and tomorrow morning and develop it into a routine. So that you can feel and benefit from the positive impact it will have on your mind, your mood, your well-being and your productivity.

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